

# 2018 MIAC Men's Cross Country Championship Preview

Posted: Oct 25, 2018

**NORTHFIELD, Minn.** – The Minnesota Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (MIAC) will crown its 2018 men's cross country champion on Saturday. For the second year in a row - and the third time since 1991 - that coronation will occur on the campus of St. Olaf College. The Oles will join the University of St. Thomas in hosting the 2018 Championships.

The 11-team men's 8K race is set to begin at 12 p.m. on Saturday. St. Olaf and Carleton enter the 2018 Championships with great expectations. Carleton is the defending Conference champion and returns four All-Conference honorees from last year's race, while St. Olaf is looking for its sixth title in the last seven seasons, having won the MIAC crown five straight years from 2012-16. The Oles have finished no lower than fourth as a team at any meet this season, while the Knights have been in the top-11 of every competition.

This will be far from a two-team race, however, as half of the teams ranked in the Central Region hail from the MIAC. St. Olaf leads the group at No. 1, followed by the Knights at No. 3, and St. Thomas and Bethel at Nos. 5 and 6. Saint John's is also regionally-ranked at No. 10. Hamline - the most-recent non-Northfield-based program to lay claim to the MIAC Championship, having won three in a row from 2009-11 - will also be looking to make a splash, while Gustavus and Macalester have posted solid performances all year, and Augsburg, Concordia, and Saint Mary's each entering the race with strong runners and spoiler potential.

Two-thirds of last year's All-Conference team returns to race this season, including **Thomas Lerdall** (St. Olaf-2nd), **Lucas Mueller** (Carleton-3rd), **Andrew Stumbo** (Gustavus-5th), **Matthew Wilkinson** (Carleton-6th), **Tris Dodge** (Carleton-7th), **Cameron Meikle** (Carleton-9th), **Frank Gustafson** (Hamline-10th), **Alec Kirtley** (St. Olaf-11th), **Karl Wachter** (St. Thomas-13th), and **William Anderson** (St. Olaf-15th). Seven more returning runners - **Fernando Benitez** (Hamline-16th), **Chris Boranian** (Macalester-17th), **Tyler Bethke** (Bethel-18th), **Eric Wicklund** (Concordia-19th), **Mac Doherty** (Macalester-20th), **Justin Furcich** (St. Olaf-21st), and **Andrew Plumb** (St. Olaf-23rd) – earned honorable mention All-MIAC last year.

Once the results of the 2018 MIAC Men's Cross Country Championship are tabulated and deemed final, a short awards ceremony will follow. The top 15 runners will be honored as All-Conference selections, with runners finishing in places 16-to-25 receiving All-Conference Honorable Mention. The championship team will also be honored with the presentation of the MIAC Championship plaque.

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## FOLLOW THE ACTION

Fans who are not traveling to Northfield will have access to unofficial results soon after the action concludes courtesy of [Fast Finish Results](#).

The MIAC has a championship home page for the event, that will serve as the online home of the meet. The championship page will include results and photos as they become available.

| [Championship Home Page](#) | [Results](#) | [Course Map](#) |

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## IN THE POLLS

St. Olaf is ranked No. 16 in the nation in the latest [USTFCCCA Poll](#), while Carleton is No. 22. St. Thomas was ranked No. 29 earlier this month.

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## KEEP AN EYE ON

Augsburg senior **Ryan Moore** (St. Michael, Minn. | St. Michael-Albertville) was the Auggies' leader their last time out at the 38th annual Jim Drew Invitational on the campus of Wis.-La Crosse earlier this month. Moore finished the 8,000-meter race in 28:46.7. He has been Augsburg's top finisher in three of four races this season.



Bethel sophomore **Ezekiel Lelinga** (New Brighton, Minn. | Mounds View) overcame the cold, a side-stitch, and a knee issue to pass 20 runners in the final mile and a half to lead the Royals with a 26:20.7 time at Wis.-Oshkosh's Pre-National meet on October 13. Lelinga has a trio of top-25 finishes this season.

Carleton sophomore **Lucas Mueller** (St. Paul, Minn. | Nova Classical Academy) finished fourth overall in the 349-runner field, clocking in at 25:15.2, at the Oshkosh meet two weeks ago. He has placed second and fourth overall at his last two races and was the third-place finisher at last year's MIAC Championships.

Concordia junior **Eric Wicklund** (Moorhead, Minn.) ran the 8K Ron Pynn Classic course in 26:51, finishing just outside the top-25 as an individual. Wicklund has led the Cobbers at two straight meets and three of the team's five competitions this season.

**Andrew Stumbo** (Boone, Iowa | Ogden) turned in another solid time with a 25:56.0 at the UW-La Crosse Invitational two weeks ago. Stumbo has led the Gusties in three of four meets this season and finished among the top-25 in all four races.

Hamline sophomore **Frank Gustafson** (Spicer, Minn. | New London-Spicer) has been the Pipers top finisher three times this season, including both of the last two races. His top finish this season was 14th at the Luther All-American Invite in September with a time of 21:07.6.

Macalester senior **Mac Doherty** (Madison, Wis. | East) has been a top-15 finisher three times this season, most recently finishing second at the UW-Oshkosh 8K Invite two weeks ago with a time of 27:33.8 to help the Scots claim first-place as a team.

Saint John's senior **Kevin Mathison** (Stewartville, Minn.) has led the Johnnies in their last two races. He placed ninth out of 135 runners - seventh among collegiate participants and second in Division III - with a time of 24:37 at the Lewis & Clark Invitational in Estacada, Ore. earlier this month.

In three consecutive meets, sophomore **Isaiah Olsem** (Fulda, Minn.) has been Saint Mary's top finisher, clocking an eight-kilometer time of 27:39 to lead the Cards to a 17th-place finish at the UW-La Crosse Jim Drews Invitational earlier this month.

St. Olaf has placed a runner in the top-10 of every race this season. **Jonah Herzog** (Champaign, Ill. | University Lab School) and **Thomas Lerdall** (Plymouth, Minn. | Wayzata) both have a pair of top-10 finishes, while **William Anderson** (Deerfield, Ill.) added another.

St. Thomas junior **Karl Wachter** (Shakopee, Minn.) has finished in the top-10 three times this season, winning the Crown Invitational to open the season, placing third at the Wartburg Invite to close out September, and coming in eighth at the Connecticut College Invitational two weeks ago.